

## Letter from Alexander Graham Bell to Sarah Fuller, January 26, 1907

1331 CONNECTICUT AVENUE, WASHINGTON, D. C. January 26, 1907. Miss Sarah A. Fuller, Horace Mann School, Newbury Street, Boston, Mass. Dear Miss Fuller:—

Your note of January 15 received, enclosing letter from Mrs. Church which I return. I have also received letters from Mr. Shaw and Mrs. Church.

I am very unwilling to be dragged into this most distressing case in which my sympathies are deeply aroused, and not knowing what to do without putting my foot in it, as the saying is, I have done nothing beyond writing to Mr. Shaw and to Mrs. Church, letters of which I enclose copies.

I have been so engrossed with Smithsonian matters for a long time past, that I have practically been unable to attend to anything else. We have at last elected Mr. Walcott (Director) of the Geological Survey) as Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution in succession to Prof. Langley, and I have now time to attend to other matters.

I wish you could bring back to my remembrance what it was I was to do in regard to Mr. C. J. Bell, and Mr. Storrow. 2 The matter has passed from my recollection excepting, that it had something to do with the poor graphophone you have at the School.

I have looked over my letter press file to see the nature of the correspondence I have had with Mr. Shaw and enclose for your information copies of the whole correspondence so far as I know. It is a delicate matter for anyone to interfere between a little child and his own father, and as I know nothing personally of the matter in controversy, I think it wisest to keep out of this case altogether.

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Mrs. Church has my full sympathy, and I realize that she has only the interests of the child at heart. At the same time parents have rights which cannot be ignored excepting for the gravest reasons, and if as she thinks Mr. Shaw is morally unfit for the custody of his own child, that would be a sufficient reason that the custody should be given to her. But this is a matter for the court to decide, and not for me. I know nothing personally of Mr. Shaw's character or moral unfitness but the court will have evidence before it upon which to base a just conclusion. I am much distressed about the whole matter, and specially distressed on account of my inability to come in on one side or the other.

3

I have some recollection of sending Mr. Shaw a letter for publication but cannot find it here; whatever it is, there is no harm in it, as it was simply a note written on general principle to encourage an unknown deaf man in pursuing electrical inventions for the benefit of the Deaf.

Yours sincerely, Alexander Graham Bell

Copy January 26, 1907. Mrs. L. Thurston Church, 67 Sycamore Street, Somerville, Mass.  
Dear Mrs. Church:—

I am very much distressed about your little grandchild, but do not know what to do. I do not wish to be brought into a case concerning the merits of which I know nothing. Of this you may rest assured, that Mr. Shaw possesses no letters from me testifying to his character or that could properly be used, "as an inducement for sympathizing friends to donate toward the charities he is supposed to represent".

I have only met Mr. Shaw two or three times in the course of my life, if as many times, and know nothing about him personally.

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If he makes use of my name in the manner you state, it would do your cause no harm to call upon him to produce any letters he may claim to have received from me.

Yours sincerely, (Signed) Alexander G. Bell.

Copy January 26, 1907. Mr. William E. Shaw, 41 Norton Street, Dorchester, Mass. Dear Sir:—

Your note of January 14 received, You say, that you are having trouble with your first wife's people, who declare you are unfit to have charge of your son, because you are Deaf, and you ask me for a letter relating to the fitness and worth of deaf persons in the duties of parents etc.

Now I understand that action is taken against you not on the ground that you are deaf, but that you are morally unfit to have charge of a young child. As I know nothing personally of your moral character, only having met you once or twice incidentally, I must decline to be brought into this case by supplying you with a letter to be used in court.

I sympathize with you in your desire for the custody of your little boy, I sympathize with the grandmother, who has taken care of the child since the death of his mother, and who has learned to love him, and wish him well; but after all the question is not one relating to sympathy with you or with the grandmother, but what is best for the child. I have every confidence that the court will decide wisely in this matter, and must therefore decline to interfere in a case of the merits of which I know nothing.

Yours sincerely, Signed (Alexander Graham Bell

Copies of Letters sent to Mr. Shaw . Baddeck, N. S., October 22, 1903. Mr. Wm. E. Shaw, 12 Linden Street, Linden, Massachusetts. My dear Sir:—

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Dr. Graham Bell has asked me to acknowledge receipt of your letter of October 15, and to say that while he would be very much pleased to attend your interesting exhibition, he finds it impossible at present to leave Beinn Bhreagh.

Allow me to convey Dr. Bell's kindest regards and his best wishes for all possible success in your worthy undertakings.

Very truly yours, (Signed) W. M. Mitchell. Secretary.

Baddeck, N. S., August 15, 1904. Mr. Wm. E. Shaw, P. O. Box, 74 Brookline, Mass. Dear Sir:—

Dr. Graham Bell has requested me to acknowledge receipt of your letter of August 10, and to say that it will give him great pleasure to see you during your trip to Cape Breton.

Dr. Bell will probably remain here until the latter part of September.

Very truly yours, (Signed) W. M. Mitchell, Secretary.

Baddeck, N. S., August 23, 1904. Mr. Wm. E. Shaw, c/o Mr. Judson D. Shaw, Windsor, Nova Scotia. My dear Sir:—

I was sorry to learn from your letter of August 23, that you found it impracticable to come to Cape Breton Island as you formerly anticipated.

I have always been greatly interested in your inventions for the Deaf, and trust that the future may bring you continued success in the pursuit of your worthy inventions.

With kind regards and best wishes, I am,

Yours sincerely, (Signed) Alexander Graham Bell.

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Washington, D. C. April 2, 1906. Mr. William E. Shaw, 16 Dorr Street, Roxbury, Mass.

Dear Sir:—

I beg to acknowledge receipt of your note, together with picture of office and laboratory, to Dr. A. Graham Bell, and to state that Dr. Bell sailed for Europe last week, and will not return until the latter part of May.

I return herewith picture as requested.

Very truly yours, (Signed) Charles R. Cox. Secretary.